



**Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary
And
Channel Islands National Park
NATURALIST CORPS PROGRAM**



THE ROLE OF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY and PARK VOLUNTEERS

The success of the National Marine Sanctuary System and the National Park Service is dependent on people – dedicated staff, educators, scientists, researchers, state and local partners, nonprofit organizations, and most of all – volunteers. Volunteers are an integral part of management, research, outreach, and education. Most people want to protect the environment if they know why and how. Naturalist Corps volunteers play an important role in promoting sustainable use of sanctuary resources and acting as stewards of the sanctuary and the Park.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Naturalist Corps program objectives are to educate the community about the culturally rich and biologically diverse resources found within the 1,252 square nautical miles of the Sanctuary and Park resources, collect opportunistic data on sanctuary resources, and support cooperation among the whale watching community.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Over 100,000 tourists, school children, and local residents visit the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and Channel Islands National Park annually on board whale watch vessels, marine floating classrooms, and natural history tours. Naturalist Corps volunteers educate passengers, monitor sanctuary resources, and collect natural resource information on board marine excursion vessels and Park concessionaire vessels departing out of Santa Barbara Harbor, Ventura Harbor, and Channel Islands Harbor. The field season runs from January – October capturing the presence of migratory gray whales and foraging blue and humpback whales.

TRAINING

Naturalist Corps volunteers receive training from scientists and other experts in the field of marine science, marine mammals, seabirds, island ecology, oceanography, geology, and cultural history of the Santa Barbara Channel. Training classes will also provide information on current Sanctuary and Park issues and resource management tools, interpretation techniques, and field research techniques. The 5-week training course will include lectures, field trips, and a certification exam. The Naturalist Corps training is divided between the City of Santa Barbara and the City of Ventura to accommodate volunteers from both regions. Additional bimonthly lectures and field trips are offered throughout the field season.

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

The volunteer commitment is for a period of one year, a minimum of 8 hours per month, plus monthly meetings. In addition to field interpretation and research, Naturalist Corps volunteers provide sanctuary and Park slide presentations for local schools and community groups, and attend marine-related outreach events. Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age, be able to handle up to 8 hours at sea, and attend the required training program.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATION

The Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator at CINMS supervises all CINMS intern and volunteer programs, including the Naturalist Corps program. Volunteers are not responsible for interfacing the program with participating vessels. All concerns regarding vessel operators and the program in general should be brought to the attention of the proper staff at CINMS or the CINP. Any scheduling concerns or general issues should be directed to staff designated to assist with coordination of the Naturalist Corps program.

VOLUNTEER SCHEDULING

ALL volunteer scheduling on board participating vessels will be coordinated through CINMS. The process for scheduling will occur at designated volunteer meetings where sign-up calendars will be available for all participating vessels. Once everyone has signed up for their minimum commitment of 1-day per month, the calendar will be made available again for volunteers to choose additional trips. Additional community outreach opportunities will be available through sign-up sheets at monthly meetings.

Vessel operators ARE responsible for their passengers, vessel route, trip schedule, and weather cancellations. Vessel operators will NOT notify Naturalist Corps volunteers about the status of a trip and they reserve the right to change a scheduled trip at any time. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to call in advance to check on any trip cancellations.

If a volunteer is absent for two consecutive scheduled shifts they will be given low priority for future trip scheduling. After two months of no communication with the Naturalist Corps program coordinator the volunteer will be dropped from the program. In the event that a shift will be missed due to extenuating circumstances volunteers are responsible for arranging a substitute using the volunteer phone or email list.

All hours of service can be documented by using the enclosed volunteer time sheet. Records should be turned into the Naturalist Corps program coordinator on a regular basis to be used for annual volunteer recognition and CINMS annual volunteer statistics.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Selected Naturalist Corps volunteers will be recognized for outstanding service at the end of the field season. Hours of service, attendance records, extended commitment, assisting with research, and improvements in naturalist abilities are tools to measure volunteer success. Term of service will also be used to recognize commitment. Recognized volunteers are given priority to remain in the program the following year. The initial training classes only have to be attended the first year.

LEGAL DISCLAIMER

The participant acknowledges that he/she is participating in the Naturalist Corps program of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary and Channel Islands National Park. He/ she is not required to participate in boating, hiking, lifting heavy objects or related activities, and is aware of the risks of these activities, nevertheless, desires to participate in such activities, and assumes all of the risks incidental thereto in order to further his/ her education, secure valuable training, and/ or other benefits. The participant further acknowledges that he/ she is not to become an employee or affiliate of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, Channel Islands National Park, or any other agency or institution by virtue of participating in the Naturalist Corps Program or any related activities.

The participant further attests that he/ she is responsible for being physically fit and, trained and qualified to participate in the activities in association with the Naturalist Corps program. He/ she acknowledges that activities on board vessels and island landings can be dangerous, and if he/ she chooses to engage in this activity, it is not required by the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary or Channel Islands National Park to participate in the Naturalist Corps program, and he/ she does so at their own risk.

The participant hereby voluntarily releases, discharges, waives, and relinquishes any and all actions, or causes of action for personal injury, property, damage, or wrongful death arising as a result of engaging in, or receiving instruction in said program, and any activities incidental to the program, wherever, or however such may occur.

The undersigned does for him/ herself, his/ hers heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, hereby release, waive discharge, and relinquish any action or causes of action which may hereinafter arise, and agrees that under no circumstances will he/ she or his/ hers heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns prosecute or present any claim for personal injury, property damage, or wrongful death against the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, the program leaders, Project Director, staff, or any agency or institution they are affiliated with. The participant acknowledges that he/ she expressly assumes the risk of personal injury, property damage, or wrongful death. He/ she further warrants that he/ she is fully aware of the potential hazards and dangers incidental to engaging in activities of the program.